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ABSTRACT

Schools have a yearly rhythm--changing with the cycle and demands of the school calendar. There is the Season of Hope as the school year starts; then comes homework discontent, conferences of concern, grading and testing crises, newspaper attacks, worries about burnout, and the search for renewal. In keeping with all this, the material compiled here offers some ideas and aids that can be used to enhance support for students, their families, and the staff at school each month. There are also references and information on linking to other resources for more in-depth follow up. All school stakeholders, and especially student support staff, can play a major role in addressing cyclical school concerns. By doing so, it is hoped to increase the likelihood that schools will be better places for all who spend so much of their lives there. (Author)

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Improving Teaching and Learning Supports by Addressing the Rhythm of a Year. A Resource Aid.

Center for Mental Health in Schools
University of California at Los Angeles

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A Resource Aid for

Improving Teaching and Learning Supports by Addressing the Rhythm of a Year

August, 2003

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Preface

Each month, over a 12 month period, we developed a series of thematic resource aids reflecting the yearly rhythm of schools. Our intent was to encourage school staff, especially student support personnel, to be proactive and timely in promoting a focus on some basic concerns that arise throughout the year. Every month, there are important opportunities for anticipating predictable problems and planning prevention and early intervention to minimize them. By pursuing such opportunities, schools enhance teachers' ability to do their job well.

With all this in mind, each month we compiled a brief set of ideas, activities, and tools related to a monthly theme. The material is meant to be used as a basis for planning and implementing interventions. To circulate the material, we designed a website format for easy sharing among school staff. Through our Center outreach activities, we encourage such sharing to enhance awareness about cyclical school concerns and the need to address them.

For ease of access, a special section of our Center's website was created for these resources. They can be downloaded from the homepage (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu) by clicking on the icon labeled: *Ideas for Enhancing Support at your School: This Month*. While we were developing the resources, a new theme was added to the site at the beginning of each month. Now that we have completed the 12 month cycle, any or all of the 12 themes are available online.

This packet is a hardcopy compilation of the 12 monthly themes. In looking them over, it will be evident that they can be "rearranged" to fit the rhythm of a particular school.

CONTENTS

September	Getting off to a Good Start	2
October	Enabling School Adjustment	5
November	Responding to Referrals in Ways That Can "Stem the Tide"	8
December	Re-engaging Students: Using a student's time off in ways that pay off!	15
January	New Year's Resolutions – A Time for Renewal; A New Start for Everyone	22
February	The Mid-Point of a School Year - Report Cards & Conferences: Another Barrier or a Challenging Opportunity	28
March	Reducing Stress; Preventing Burnout	34
April	Spring Can Be a High Risk Time for Students	38
May	Time to Help Students and Families Plan Successful Transitions to a New Grade or a New School	47
June	Summer and the Living Aint Easy	52
July	Using "Down Time" to Plan Better Ways to Work Together in Providing Learning Supports	56
August	Now is the Time to Develop Ways to Avoid Burnout	59

Introduction

Schools have a yearly rhythm – changing with the cycle and demands of the school calendar. There is the Season of Hope as the school year starts; then comes homework discontent, conferences of concern, grading and testing crises, newspaper attacks, worries about burnout, and the search for renewal.

In keeping with all this, the material compiled here offers some ideas and aids that can be used to enhance support for students, their families, and the staff at a school each month. There are also references and information on linking to other resources for more indepth follow up.

All school stakeholders, and especially student support staff, can play a major role in addressing cyclical school concerns. By doing so, we increase the likelihood that schools will be better places for all who spend so much of their lives there.

September

Welcoming Strategies for Students & Their Families

Starting a new school can be scary. Those concerned with mental health in schools can play important prevention and therapeutic roles by helping a school establish a welcoming program and ways to provide ongoing social support.

Special attention must be directed at providing Office Staff with training and resources so they can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere to everyone who enters the school. And, of course, there must be workshops and follow-up assistance for teachers to help them establish welcoming procedures and materials.

Start simple. For example, assist teachers in establishing a few basic ways to help new students feel welcome and part of things, such as:

- ***giving the student a Welcome Folder***

  A folder with the student's name, containing welcoming materials and information, such as a welcome booklet and information about fun activities at the school.

- ***assigning a Peer Buddy***

  Train students to be a special friend
  >to show the new student around
  >to sit next to the new student
  >to take the new student to recess and lunch to meet schoolmates

Some parents are not sure how to interact with the school. Two ways to help new parents feel welcome and a part of things are to establish processes whereby teachers

- ***invite parents to a Welcoming Conference***

  This is meant as a chance for parents to get to know the teacher and school and for the teacher to facilitate positive connections between parent and school such as helping the parents connect with a school activity in which they seem interested. The emphasis is on Welcoming – thus, any written material given out at this time specifically states WELCOME and is limited to simple orientation information. To the degree feasible, such material is made available in the various languages of those likely to enroll at the school.

- ***connect parents with a Parent Peer Buddy***

  Identify some parents who are willing to be a special friend to introduce the new parent around, to contact them about special activities and take them the first time, and so forth.

The following list are additional examples of prevention-oriented welcoming and social support strategies for minimizing negative experiences and ensuring positive outreach.

1.FRONT DOOR: Set up a Welcoming Table (identified with a welcoming sign) at the front entrance to the school and recruit and train volunteers to meet and greet everyone who comes through the door.

2.FRONT OFFICE: Work with the Office Staff to create ways to meet and greet strangers with a smile and an inviting atmosphere. Provide them with welcoming materials and information sheets regarding registration steps (with appropriate translations). Encourage the use of volunteers in the office so that there are sufficient resources to take the necessary time to greet and assist new students and families. It helps to have a designated registrar and even designated registration times.

3.WELCOMING MATERIALS: Prepare a booklet that clearly says WELCOME and provides some helpful info about who's who at the school, what types of assistance are available to new students and families, and offers tips about how the school runs. (Avoid using this as a place to lay down the rules; that can be rather an uninviting first contact.) Prepare other materials to assist students and families in making the transition and connecting with ongoing activities.

4.STUDENT GREETERS: Establish a Student Welcoming Club (perhaps the student council or leadership class can make this a project). These students can provide tours and some orientation (including initial introduction to key staff).

5.PARENT/VOLUNTEER GREETERS: Establish a General Welcoming Club of parents and/or volunteers who provide regular tours and orientations (including initial introduction to key staff). Develop a Welcoming Video.

6.WELCOMING BULLETIN BOARD: Dedicate a bulletin board (somewhere near the entrance to the school) that says WELCOME and includes such things as pictures of school staff, a diagram of the school and its facilities, pictures of students who entered the school during the past 1-2 weeks, information on tours and orientations, special meetings for new students, and so forth.

7.CLASSROOM GREETERS: Each teacher should have several students who are willing and able to greet strangers who come to the classroom. Recent arrivals often are interested in welcoming the next set of new enrollees.

8.CLASSROOM INTRODUCTION: Each teacher should have a plan to assist new students and families in making a smooth transition into the class. This includes ways to introduce the student to classmates as soon as the student arrives. (Some teachers may want to arrange with the office specified times for bringing a new student to the class.) An introductory Welcoming Conference should be conducted with the student and family as soon as feasible. A useful Welcoming aid is to present both the student and the family member with Welcoming Folders (or some other welcoming gift such as coupons from local businesses that have adopted the school).

(cont.)

9.PEER BUDDIES: In addition to the classroom greeter, a teacher can have several students who are trained to be a special buddy to a new student for a couple of weeks (and hopefully thereafter). This can provide the type of social support that allows a new student to learn about the school culture and how to become involved in activities.

10.OUTREACH FROM ORGANIZED GROUPS: Establish a way for representatives of organized student and parent groups (including the PTSA) to make direct contact with new students and families to invite them to learn about activities and to assist them in joining in when they find activities that appeal to them.

11.SUPPORT GROUPS: Offer groups designed to help new students and families learn about the community and the school and to allow them to express concerns and have them addressed. Such groups also allow them to connect with each other as another form of social support.

12.ONGOING POSITIVE CONTACTS: Develop a variety of ways students and their families can feel an ongoing connection with the school and classroom (e.g., opportunities to volunteer help, positive feedback regarding participation, letters home that tell "all about what's happening").

Additional Center Materials on Starting a New School Year –
Welcoming and Social Support:

- *Easing the Impact of Student Mobility: Welcoming and Social Support*, Newsletter Article, Fall, 1997
- *What Schools Can Do to Welcome and Meet the Needs of All Students and Families* (Guidebook)
- *Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families* (Technical Aid Packet)

Quick Find Search Topics: *>Transition Programs >Grade Articulation >Welcoming*

Good ideas!

October

Enabling School Adjustment

This is the season for ensuring that students have made a good adjustment to school. And, if they haven't, it is time to address any problems in the earliest stages.

> INVEST NOW OR PAY LATER! At this time, it will be clear that some students are experiencing difficulties adjusting to new classes(content and standards), new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc. It is particularly poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but is disorganized and can't keep up.

If these difficulties are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase. Misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties. What appears as a school problem may be the result of problems at home.

This is the time to be proactive. This is the time for staff development to focus on the type of strategies we have compiled here. This is the time for student support staff to work with teachers in their classrooms to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions.

We have compiled ideas for

- *addressing transition problems*
- *enhancing engagement in learning*
- *working as a team to prevent problems from escalating.*

Also, included are links to in-depth prevention and early intervention strategies.

Some Guidelines

- Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.
- Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).
- Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.
- Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
- Explore other possible causal factors.
- Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).

Some Basic Strategies

Try new strategies in the classroom – based on the best information about what is causing the problem. Enhance student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that are of current greatest interest and which the student indicates (s)he wants to and can pursue and (b) a temporary deemphasis on areas that are not of high interest.

If a student seems easily distracted, the following might be used:

1. identify any specific environmental factors that distract the student and make appropriate environmental changes
2. have the student work with a group with others who are task-focused
3. designate a volunteer to help the student whenever s/he becomes distracted and/or starts to misbehave, and if necessary, to help the student make transitions
4. allow for frequent "breaks"
5. interact with the student in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

If a student needs more direction, the following might be used:

1. develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral, written, and perhaps pictorial and color-coded guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules
2. ensure someone checks with the student frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)
3. support student's efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to the student's progress and next steps

If the student has difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled, the following might be used:

1. modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests
2. modify the nature of the process and products (e.g., allow use of technological tools and allow for oral, audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, and computer generated products)

To accomplish the above: Enhance use of aides, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc. not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance the student's social support network. Encourage structured staff discussions and staff development about what teachers can do and what other staff (mentors, student support staff, resource teachers, etc.) can do to team with teachers in their classrooms to enable school adjustment.

What If the above Strategies Don"t Work?

- If the new strategies don't work, talk to others at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).
- After trying all the above, add some tutoring designed to enhance student engagement in learning and to facilitate learning of specific academic and social skills that are seen as barriers to effective classroom performance and learning.
- Only after all this is done and has not worked is it time to use the school's referral processes to ask for additional support services. As such services are added, it, of course, becomes essential to coordinate them with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

The Following Center Resources Will Be Helpful for Structured Staff Discussions:

Enabling Learning in the Classroom (Newsletter article, Spring '98)

Re-engaging Students in Learning (Quick Training Aid)

Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning (Training Tutorial)

Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning (Cont. Educ. modules)

Quick Find Search Topics: *>Classroom Focused Enabling* *>Motivation*

All these materials are available for downloading on the website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu and you can copy them to share with others.

November

Responding to Referrals in Ways that Can "Stem the Tide"

In previous months, a supportive school has taken steps to welcome and provide social supports, to ensure that students have made a good adjustment to school, and to address initial adjustment problems as they arise.

Now come the referrals for students who are manifesting behavior, learning, and emotional problems.

And these referrals bring with them a need to take steps to "stem the tide" through further enhancement of what takes place in the classroom and at school to prevent and address problems as soon as they arise.

If your school staff has developed a good referral system, it is essential to take steps to counter the "field of dreams" effect. (*Build it and they will come.)*

The key here is for the school team that processes referrals to do three things as they review each student:

- Determine the best course of action for helping the student
- Analyze the problem with a view to ways the classroom and school might change in order to minimize the need for similar referrals in the future
- Take steps to assist in implementing classroom and school changes that can prevent problems.

Doing all this requires staff development for the case review team, teachers, and other school staff.

Student support staff need to play a major role in such staff development.

Staff Development Focus #1

Improving the Referral System

Referral systems need to be designed in ways that stress the analysis of why problems are arising and not just to assess and funnel youngsters to services. And when services are needed, the referral must be designed as a transition intervention to ensure necessary services are appropriately accessed.

The following is a staff development tool for improving the system. Highlighted below are matters to be considered as a school develops its systems for problem identification, triage, referral, and management of care.

Developing Systems for Problem Identification, Triage, Referral, and Management of Care at a School

Problem identification

a. Problems may be identified by anyone (staff, parent, student).
b. There should be an Identification Form that anyone can access and fill out.
c. There must be an easily accessible place for people to turn in forms.
d. All stakeholders must be informed regarding the availability of forms, where to turn them in, and what will happen after they do so.

Triage processing

a. Each day the submitted forms must be reviewed, sorted, and directed to appropriate resources by a designated and trained triage processor. Several individuals can share this task; for example, different persons can do it on a specific day or for specified weeks.
b. After the sorting is done, the triage processor should send a Status Information Form to the person who identified the problem (assuming it was not a self-referral).

Clients directed to resources or for further problem analysis and recommendations

a. For basic necessities of daily living (e.g., food, clothing, etc.), the triage processor should provide information about resources either through the person who identified the problem or directly to the student/family in need.
b. If the problem requires a few sessions of immediate counseling to help a student/family through a crisis, the triage processor should send the form to the person who makes assignments to on-site counselors.
c. The forms for all others are directed to a small triage "team" (1-3 trained professionals) for further analysis and recommendations. (If there is a large case load, several teams might be put into operation.) Members of such a team may not have to meet on all cases; some could be reviewed independently with recommendations made and passed on the next reviewer for validation. In complex situations, however, not only might a team meeting be indicated, it may be necessary to gather more information from involved parties (e.g., teacher, parent, student).

Interventions to ensure recommendations and referrals are pursued appropriately

a. In many instances, prereferral interventions should be recommended. Some of these will reflect an analysis that suggests that the student's problem is really a system problem – the problem is more a function of the teacher or other environment factors. Other will reflect specific strategies that can address the students problem without referral for outside the class assistance. Such analyses indicate ways in which a site must be equipped to implement and monitor the impact of prereferral recommendations.
b. When students/families need referral for health and social services, procedures should be established to facilitate motivation and ability for follow-through. Care management should be designed to determine follow-through, coordination, impact, and possible need for additional referrals.
c. Referrals to assess the need for special or compensatory education often are delayed because of a waiting list. Back logs should be monitored and arrangements made to catch-up (e.g., by organizing enough released time to do the assessments and reviews).

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Management of care (case monitoring and management)

a. Some situations require only a limited form of monitoring (e.g., to ensure follow-through). A system must be developed for assigning care monitors as needed. Aides and paraprofessionals often can be trained to for this function.
b. Other situations require intensive management by specially trained professionals to (a) ensure interventions are coordinated/integrated and appropriate, (b) continue problem analysis and determine whether appropriate progress is made, (c) determine whether additional assistance is needed, and so forth. There are many models for intensive management of care. For example, one common approach is to assign the responsibility to the professional who has the greatest involvement (or best relationship) with the student/family.
c. One key and often neglected function of the care manager is to provide appropriate status updates to all parties who should be kept informed.

This material is from the Center's Technical Aid Packet entitled *School-based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care* which discusses why it is important to approach student clients as consumers and to think in terms of managing care not cases. The packet also discusses prereferral interventions and deals with referral as a multifaceted intervention. Examples of tools to aid in the various processes are included.

Also, specifically designed as an aid for staff development is the Center's Quick Training Aid on *Case Management in the School Context.*

Both are online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Helping each other

makes it happen

Staff Development Focus #2

Increasing Staff Understanding About the Motivational Bases for Many Problems and About Classroom and School Changes that can Minimize Problems Arising from Low or Negative Motivation

It is particularly important to address the reality that a few months into a school year positive motivational influences arising from the newness of the year (novelty, the "honeymoon" period, etc.) will have subsided. Many behavior, learning, and emotional problems arise at this time and could be countered by staff strategies designed to produce "motivational renewal."

For staff development to improve understanding of the motivational bases for many behavior, learning, and emotional problems and what to do about them, you can use the following Center resources:

See:

>>Module II of *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom Focused Enabling* (Continuing Education Modules)

>>*Re-engaging Students in Learning* (Quick Training Aid)

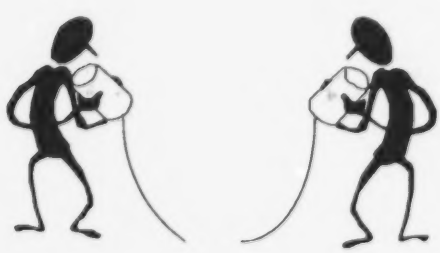
>>*Behavior Problems at School* (Quick Training Aid)

>>*Learning Problems and Learning Disabilities* (Intro Packet)

One place to start is with staff development designed to increase the ability of school staff for talking with kids. The following is abstracted from the above materials. A simple strategy to stimulate staff interest might be to copy it and put it in the staff mailboxes (and/or post it) along with a note offering a study group for those who want to learn more about the motivational bases for many problems and about classroom and school changes that can minimize problems arising from low or negative motivation.

Do you understand what I want?
\

Do you care about me?
/



11

About Talking with Kids

To help another, it is of great value and in many instances essential to know what the other is thinking and feeling. The most direct way to find this out is for the person to tell you. But, individuals probably won't tell you such things unless they think you will listen carefully. And the way to convince them of this is to listen carefully.

Of course, you won't always hear what you would like.

Helper: *Well, Jose, how do you like school?*
Jose: *Closed!*

In general, effective communication requires the ability to carry on a productive dialogue, that is, to talk with, not at, others. This begins with the ability to be an active (good) listener and to avoid prying and being judgmental. It also involves knowing when to share information and relate one's own experiences as appropriate and needed. The following are suggestions for engaging youngsters in productive dialogues.

I. Creating the Context for Dialogues

Create a private space and a climate where the youngster can feel it is safe to talk.
Clarify the value of keeping things confidential.
Pursue dialogues when the time, location, and conditions are right.
Utilize not just conferences and conversations, but interchanges when working together (e.g. exploring and sampling options for learning).

II. Establishing Credibility (as someone to whom it is worth talking)

Respond with empathy, warmth, and nurturance (e.g., the ability to understand and appreciate what others are thinking and feeling, transmit a sense of liking, express appropriate reassurance and praise, minimize criticism and confrontation).
Show genuine regard and respect (e.g., the ability to transmit real interest, acceptance, and validation of the other's feelings and to interact in a way that enables others to maintain a feeling of integrity and personal control.
Use active and undistracted listening.
Keep in mind that you want the student to feel more competent, self-determining, and related to you (and others) as a result of the interchange.

(cont.)

III. Facilitating Talk

Avoid interruptions.
Start slowly, avoid asking questions, and minimize pressure to talk (the emphasis should be more on conversation and less on questioning).
Encourage the youngster to take the lead.
Humor can open a dialogue; sarcasm usually has the opposite effect.
Listen with interest.
Convey the sense that you are providing an opportunity by extending an invitation to talk and avoiding the impression of another demanding situation (meeting them "where they are at" in terms of motivation and capability is critical in helping them develop positive attitudes and skills for oral communication).
Build on a base of natural, informal inter-changes throughout the day.
When questions are asked, the emphasis should be on open-ended rather than Yes/No questions.
Appropriate self-disclosure by another can disinhibit a reluctant youngster.
Pairing a reluctant youngster with a supportive peer or small group can help.
Train and use others (aides, volunteers, peers) to (1) enter into productive (nonconfidential) dialogues that help clarify the youngster's perceptions and then (2) share the information with you in the best interests of helping. For youngsters who can't seem to convey their thoughts and feelings in words, their behavior often says a lot about their views; based on your observations and with the idea of opening a dialogue, you can share your perceptions and ask if you are right.
Sometimes a list of items (e.g. things that they like/don't like to do at school/after school) can help elicit views and open up a dialogue.
When youngsters have learning, behavior, and emotional problems, find as many ways as feasible to have positive interchanges with them and make positive contacts outweigh the negatives.
Remember: Short periods of silence are part of the process and should be accommodated.

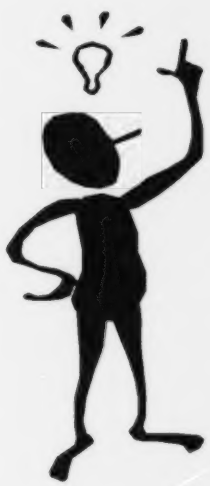
Of course, other problems arise because of the way the system is operating. For example, analysis of behavior problems usually find that certain situations chronically contribute to problems (e.g., before school and lunch periods where youngsters do not have a good range of interesting recreational options leads some to get into trouble everyday).

A dramatic example comes from a district that found it had a significant increase in teen pregnancies among middle schoolers. Analyses traced the problem to too long a period of unsupervised time from when the school day ended until parents were home from work. To address the problem, the district moved the start of middle school later in the morning so the school day would end later, and with less time to fill, it was feasible to provide more after-school recreational opportunities. The number of teen pregnancies dropped.

For more materials on these topics, go to the Center Website at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu and use the Quick Find Search
to explore the following (among others) topics:

>>Case and Care Management
>>Motivation
>>Enabling Component
>>Classroom-focused Enabling
>>Environments that Support Learning
>>Classroom Management
>>School Avoidance
>>Dropout Prevention
>>Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome

More good ideas!



December

Re-engaging Students: Using a student's time off in ways that pay off!

For school staff and students the winter break is a welcome time for rest and relaxation.

It is also a valuable opportunity for appreciating what we have accomplished in the first part of the school year, facing the fact that there are some problems that need to be addressed, and anticipating a fresh start in the new year.

We began the school year in September with a focus on Welcoming Students and their families; in October we looked at strategies to help with school adjustment; in November we explored procedures for more effective referrals including strategies for talking with kids to better understand the motivational bases of problems.

By December, school staff and students know that for some students *"it isn't working."*

Since giving up is no option, we need to focus on ***re-engagement.***

> *Remember: "Burn out" of school staff and students is grounded in intrinsic motivation*
>
> In particular, staff feel discouraged when we experience a lack of success with students. It threatens our feelings of competence and makes us feel disconnected from the kids we mean to help. And, it can lead to feelings that we aren't really in control of our work.
>
> December is a time for mid-course corrections to turn this all around. A time to think how we might do things differently to get the results we want.
>
> > As Winnie the Pooh says (while Christopher Robin is dragging him by his heel downstairs and his head is bumping on each stair), *"I think there is a better way to do this if only I could stop bumping long enough to think of it."*
>
> School breaks provide the time to stop bumping and try to re-engage students who seem to have become rather disengaged from classroom learning (and are finding other, often disruptive, ways to spend their time at school.)

For support staff and teachers, the following are some ideas for starting to turn things around before winter break and to follow-up with immediately after students return.

The first step is for support staff and teachers to establish the kind of working relationship that is motivated by the desire to (a) understand the causes for students' lack of engagement and difficult behavior and (b) try some different strategies.

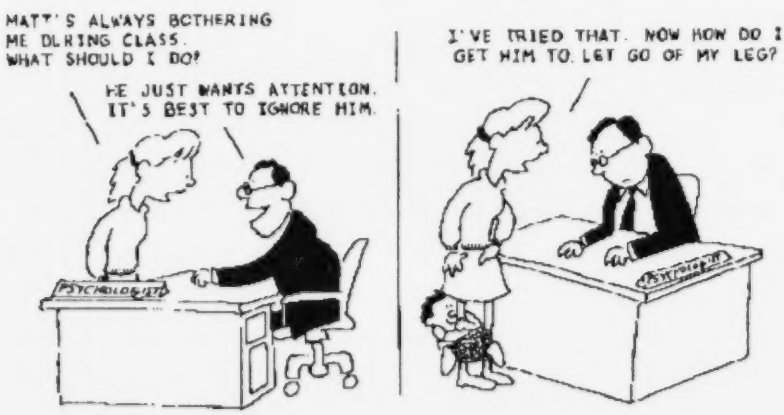
While the initial focus may be on a particular student, move toward thinking more generally about that student as one of a type who experiences learning or relationship problems and how changes in strategy would benefit as many as we can. That makes the potential pay off much greater.

Ask WHY? Why are some students not engaged in classroom learning? Why are they misbehaving? Real pathology as the cause is relatively rare. Factors away from school can be barriers, but at this time, we should focus on some of the common school-related reasons. These include:

not experiencing sufficient success in learning, so they give up;
not having a good relationship with the teacher, so they react/resist;
not having connected with a supportive group of friends, so they feel isolated/alienated.

Worse yet, a few students may be experiencing a lack of success related to all three matters.

Any of the above can set a negative cycle into motion. And, once students have a negative image and reputation, we are all in trouble.


MATT'S ALWAYS BOTHERING ME DURING CLASS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
HE JUST WANTS ATTENTION. IT'S BEST TO IGNORE HIM.
I'VE TRIED THAT. NOW HOW DO I GET HIM TO LET GO OF MY LEG?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOME THINGS TO DO BEFORE AND RIGHT AFTER WINTER BREAK

1.INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES BEFORE THE BREAK: Schools need to assist teachers at this time of year by facilitating time for them to conference individually with each student who has been having problems. In some cases, the student's parents need to be included. The focus is on how to use the time before and through the winter break as a period for renewing positive relationships and re-engaging the student in classroom learning. Student support staff can play a role in arranging such conferences and then covering the teacher's class while the teacher holds the conferences. The discussions should cover (a) why there has been a problem (without getting into a "blame-game"), (b) exploring some new ways that the student thinks could make things better for all concerned, and (c) arriving at some mutual agreements (not one-way "contracts").

2.IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE OF IMAGE: For students who have acquired a negative reputation, it is critical to develop some immediate opportunities for them to take on some attractive, positive roles (e.g., team captain, special monitor, photographer for the school newspaper, part of the design group for the school's website).

3.ADD SOME EXTRA CARING SUPPORT: Use volunteers, aids, and/or other students to provide additional support to these specific students. Make certain the tone is one of caring not censure and that the support provides real opportunities to discover the value of learning and not another monitoring device.

4.POSITIVE ACTIVITIES OVER THE WINTER BREAK: While it would be good if these students could use the break to catch up on missing skills, the greater pay off will come if families focus on enhancing motivation for school. A strategy for this is for the teacher to outline for students and families some fun activities (e.g., intrinsically motivating projects) to do over the break. These should be ways to build on the new classroom activities that have been designed to re-engage the students. Such activities can consolidate something that has been learned recently or lay a foundation for future learning (e.g., school reading and writing projects), especially activities that are planned for re-engaging the students after the break Examples include involving students in (a) carrying out special roles related to holiday events, (b) taking pictures while on trips to special places and later bringing them to school to include in learning activities (e.g., writing stories), (c) choosing videotapes that teach as well as entertain, and so forth.

5.FIRST DAY BACK: This is the time for support staff and teachers to take special steps to individually greet and welcome back these students and be prepared to help them re-engage in positive activities and learning. Again, use volunteers, aids, and/or other students to provide extra support. Make them feel cared about and positively special.

6.KEEP IT UP UNTIL IT PAYS OFF.

>>Some points about:

Students who have not been successful in learning the material taught.

It could be motivational or a lack of readiness skills or????.

> "Successful, engaged learners are responsible for their own learning. These students are self-regulated and able to define their own learning goals and evaluate their own achievement. They are also energized by their learning, their joy of learning leads to a lifelong passion for solving problems, understanding, and taking the next step in their thinking. . . . In order to have engaged learning, tasks need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary. . . . The most powerful models of instruction are interactive. Instruction actively engages the learner..."
>
> From: Designing Learning and Technology for Educational Reform (1994). Jones, et al., North West Regional Educational Laboratory

What changes could be made in classrooms, with the help of support staff, special ed., and administration that would lead to most/all students being described as engaged learners? Keeping specific students in mind, what do they need in order to re-engage in classroom learning?

- ***Changes in the physical arrangement of the classroom?***

  Think about how you learn best (think of the best staff development you ever attended, your favorite place to read, the materials you need to do your best writing). What have these students told you about what makes it hard for them to function well in class? Do they do well sitting for lengthy periods of time at a desk? Do they work well with some but not other students? What distracts them? Now, explore ways to rearrange the classroom to accommodate a wider range of student differences and needs.

- ***Changes in the presentation of material?***

  Given that there are district mandated materials and content (e.g., texts), re-engaging students requires using the material differently (e.g., digestible chunks, designing opportunities for motivated practice) and supplementing it with materials and activities that the student perceives as motivating (e.g., enrichment opportunities). From a motivational perspective, offering real options and enabling student choice are essential in re-engaging students.

- ***Changes in workload and nature of feedback?***

  Given the above changes, some students still need to have workload and feedback accommodations (e.g., more time to do something, feedback that enables them to experience even small successes). From a motivational perspective, it is essential to maximize student feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to others and to minimize threats to such feelings.

The emphasis in all the above is to account for differences in motivation as well as capability in designing learning opportunities and then implementing them in ways than enhance intrinsic motivation for ongoing learning at school.

>>Some points about:
Students who haven't made a good relationship with teachers and are reacting/resisting.

Common laments:

They could do it if they only wanted to!!!
- *These are smart kids, but they just won't do the work!*
- *If he survives childhood and adolescence, he'll probably be a very successful adult!*

Making a positive, caring connection with such students is essential.

Researchers such as David Hawkins and Richard Catalano have found that a core factor in preventing problems is "strong, attached relationships with adults who hold healthy beliefs and clear standards for young people, and an investment in positive lines of action such as school, service and work."

It is ironic that this is often translated into "mentor" programs where a few students spend a few hours in such attached relationships. The real opportunity every day, all day in school (and at home) is for a teacher (and parent) to be the adult with whom a student has a strong relationship.

In their description of Communities that Care, Hawkins and Catalano describe how such bonds between students and adults are established:

> "Research shows that a child living in a high-risk environment can be protected from problem behaviors by a strong, affectionate relationship with an adult who cares about, and is committed to, his or her healthy development. This can be any caring adult – a parent, a teacher, an extended family member, a coach, and employer or an adult from the child's faith community. The most important part of this relationship is that the youth has a long-term investment in it, thathe or she believes the relationship is worth protecting, and so is motivated to follow the healthy beliefs and clear standards held by the person."

So what creates these protective bonds?

> There must be opportunities for young people to be involved in their families, school and communities in meaningful, developmentally appropriate ways – to make a real contribution and feel valued for their efforts and accomplishments.
>
> For young people to take advantage of those opportunities, they need the social, cognitive, emotional and behavioral skills to be successful. Finally, young people need recognition for their involvement . . . ."

Building a strong, positive relationship with difficult students is a challenge. Looking for the strengths, building on the competence, and re-establishing relationships of mutual respect is best achieved when support staff and teachers work as a team. Support staff often have the opportunity to get to know these students and can take the lead is helping others see what is "special" in a student who hasn't yet made good connections with teachers and school staff.

>>Some points about:

Students who haven't found a supportive group of friends and feel isolated/alienated.

For many students there is nothing as important in school as the social dynamics:

Who's in and who's out?

Who is my friend?

Who likes me and who do I like?

While schools focus on cognitive skills, they too seldom address the development of social and emotional skills. There are programs and curriculum designed for this important area of development, but every day there are natural opportunities for schools to enhance students' positive relations with each other.

In class, during breaks, before and after school, during lunch, at student activities, in the community.

This is the time of year to consider how the school is promoting social and emotional development and to plan ways to enhance the focus on such matters as:

cooperative learning and team play

students as leaders at school

groups of students engaged in project learning

students involved in service learning in the community

same-age and cross-age peer contact

Schools have learned a great deal about reducing bullying and violence and promoting a supportive environment. Some students need just a bit more help in connecting with other students in a positive way. School support staff and teachers can create a range of opportunities both inside the classroom and out of class to address these problems.

For more materials on these topics, go to the Center Website and use the Quick Find Search to explore the following (among others) topics:

>>Barriers to Learning
>>Classroom-focused Enabling
>>Environments that Support Learning
>>Mentoring
>>Motivation
>>Peer Relationships
>>Prevention for Students at Risk
>>Resilience
>>Volunteers

More good ideas!

January

New Year's Resolutions – A Time for Renewal; A New Start for Everyone

The beginning of a new calendar year is a time for "taking stock" about what's been working and what hasn't. It's a time to plan how to build on your strengths and make some changes.

Here are five "resolutions" for support staff and teachers to consider.

a. **Resolve to make the first day back special.** This is the time for support staff and teachers to take special steps to individually greet and welcome back each student and especially those who need to be re-engaged in the learning process.

   In every class, identify those students who have been having problems and plan several ways for them to feel that someone at school really cares and wants to provide them with special opportunities and ongoing support.

   Tell each identified student this is new start and help them actually experience the new opportunities and support so they don't think you are making empty promises.

b. **Resolve to follow-through**.

   Be prepared to help the identified students re-engage in positive activities and learning. Use volunteers, aids, and/or other students to provide extra support. Make them feel cared about and positively special.

   Be sure to look at a broad range of contributing causes to problems you are concerned about. Focus on changes in the classroom and school environment that might reduce commonly occurring problems in a cost effective way.

c. **Resolve to reach out to create more collaborative and mutually supportive ways to team with others at the school (in the district, and in the community).** Building supportive working relationships is the key to making the rest of the school year go better. Everyone needs others with whom to share successes and concerns. Staff at schools tend to do this informally with their colleagues. Now it is time to develop ways for working together on a regular basis to ensure greater success.

   Clarify which support staff and teachers will work together as a team to ensure follow-through in providing special opportunities and support for identified students and for making changes in the classroom and school environment.

Request time at grade level, department, and staff meetings to discuss ways to team and build capacity for working effectively together – especially with a view to helping identified students.

Identify who is most likely to be able to connect with an especially hard to reach student and plan how to make this happen.

d. **Resolve to develop mutually supportive relationships with families**. We all want family attitudes about school to be positive, hopeful, and supportive. So, we need to work in ways that can make this a reality.

Schools need to assist teachers at this time of year by facilitating time for them to conference individually with the families of each student who has been having problems. In most cases, the students should be included in these conferences. Student support staff can play a role in arranging such conferences and then covering the teacher's class while the teacher holds the conference. The discussions should cover (a) why there has been a problem (without getting into a "blame-game"), (b) exploring some new ways that everyone agrees could make things better, and (c) arriving at some mutual agreements (not one-way "contracts") about how to support each other in the coming weeks.

e. **Resolve to take care of yourself.** We all say it . . . "This year I will take better care of myself (eat better, exercise more, reduce stress, yada, yada, yada)."

For some ideas about taking better care of yourself and minimizing staff burnout, go to the Quick Find search menu on the website, find the topic of "Burnout," and download some of the material.

Help for Turning Resolutions into Actions

If you don't already have one, you may want to encourage the school to form a Resource Coordinating Team. Below are a few points about such a team. If you want more info, go to Center Materials on the website and download "Resource Oriented Teams: Key Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Education Supports."

Such a group can help enhance how resources are used at the school to make it possible for you to follow through on your good resolve, and it can help the school become more proactive in anticipating and preventing many problems.

The team does this by reviewing all resources the school is using to support learning with a view to analyzing effectiveness, redeploying wasted resources, filling gaps, and mobilizing staff, students, and families to work effectively together.

Who's on a Resource Coordinating Team?

> A Resource Coordinating Team might begin with only two people. It can expand into a group of informed stakeholders that might include an administrator, the school support staff, special education staff, regular education teachers, community agencies, family and student representatives.

As a resource team begins to "map" what the school has, the team may want to download tools for mapping. These are in "Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change." We have included two mapping tools that may help to get the team started. Even if the school doesn't establish a Resource Coordinating Team, the tools highlight the value of having "someone" do this type of mapping so that important info is available to everyone at the school. Such info provides a basis for enhancing access to resources and improving how the school addresses barriers to student learning. Doing such mapping is a good function for any of the school's student support staff to perform.

Mapping Tool

Some of the Special Resources Available at our School

This tool is designed to provide a "map" of the student support staff – names, roles and functions, schedules, and how to access. These items can be adapted to reflect the personnel at your school. Each person identified should review and revise the description to better clarify what they do. The completed info can be used for purposes of enhancing coordination of resources and to provide staff, students, and families with information about what is available and how to access the resources.

>School Psychologist (name and times at the school)_____

Provides assessment and testing of students for special services. Counseling for students and families. Support services for teachers. Prevention, crisis response, conflict resolution, program modification for special learning and/or behavior needs.

>School Nurse (name and times at the school)_____

Provides immunizations, follow-up, communicable disease control, vision and hearing screening and follow-up, health assessments and referrals, health counseling and information for students and families.

>Pupil Services & Attendance Counselor (name and times at school)_____

Provides a liaison between school and home to maximize school attendance, transition, counseling for returnees, enhancing attendance improvement activities.

>Social Worker (name times at the school)_____

Assists in identifying at-risk students and provides follow-up counseling for students and families. Refers families for additional services if needed .

>Counselors (names and times at the school)_____

General and special counseling/guidance services. Consultation with families and school staff.

>Dropout Prevention Coordinator (name and times at the school_____

Coordinates activity designed to enhance support for at risk students.

>Title I, Safe & Drug Free Schools, Bilingual Coordinators & Special Grants and Projects (names and times at the school)_____

Coordinates categorical programs, provide services to identified students, implements mandated services and monitoring.

>Special Education staff (names and times at the school)_____

>School-based Crisis Team
(names/titles)_____

>School Improvement Team
(names/titles)_____

>School Site Council
(names/titles)_____

>Community Resources providing school-linked or school-based interventions and resources:
Who, what they do, when they are available_____

Any of the above personnel might take the lead in ensuring such info is gathered, developed into an information sheet, and then circulated to all staff, students, and families.

Moreover, any of these personnel could be asked to take a lead role in forming a Resource Coordinating Team. And, any and all of the above personnel can be invited to an initial meeting. As noted above, the purpose is to discuss ways to enhance how resources are used at the school and how the school can become more proactive in anticipating and preventing many problems. To these ends, the team can review all resources the school is using to support learning with a view to analyzing effectiveness, redeploying wasted resources, filling gaps, and mobilizing staff, students, and families to work effectively together.

In addition to the info about who does what in providing learning support at the school, the team can use the following survey tool to explore ways to improve related systems at the school.

Mapping Tool

Surveying Mechanisms Used to Address Barriers to Learning

Assuming the school has a case-oriented/case review team (e.g., a student review team, a study team, a student success team, a student assistance team, a student guidance team, etc.), then you have a group that handles triage, referral, and case management functions. The focus here is on mechanisms to enhance a focus on prevention and improve existing systems and resource use.

1. Who at the school coordinates or could be designated as an administrative lead for the coordination of all the resources used to address barriers to learning?

2. Do the personnel involved in addressing barriers to learning meet together to improve coordination and integration of their resources? (e.g., Is there a resource-oriented team? If not, should a Resource Coordinating Team be established? If so, when should it meet?)

3. Who is or would be on your school's Resource Coordinating Team?

4. Who does or could review/revise/create written descriptions to give staff regarding resources at the school and in the community and information on how to gain access to them?

5. Who does or could review materials and processes used to provide families with info about available resources and how to access them?

6. What changes should be made to improve the referral, triage, and care management systems? (How can such changes be accomplished?)

7. What processes allow the school staff to make recommendations for improving the way the school addresses barriers to student learning? (If such processes don't exist or need improvement, who is responsible for making this happen?)

8. What processes allow your school to work with the other local schools in mutually beneficial ways? (If such processes don't exist or need improvement, who is responsible for making this happen?)

9. With which community resources do you have formal relationships (on site, in the community)?

10. What processes allow the school to coordinate and link with community resources in mutually beneficial ways? (If such processes don't exist or need improvement, who is responsible for making this happen?)

If you are interested in learning more about the above matters, go to the Quick Find search menu on the website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu, and choose from among the following:

>>Collaboration
>>Environments that support learning
>>Mapping School and Community Resources
>>Needs and Assets Assessment and Mapping
>>Prevention for Students "At Risk"
>>Resilience/Protective Factors
>>Safe Schools & Violence Prevention
>>School and Community Collaboration
>>Social and Emotional Development and Social Skills
>>Staffing Student Support Systems
>>Youth Development

February

The Mid-Point of a School Year - Report Cards & Conferences: Another Barrier or a Challenging Opportunity

Look at most school calendars for the month if February. They say...

End of a Semester; Start of a New One
Report Cards
Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences

About First Semester Report Cards and Conferences

What happens at this point is critical in either cementing or altering teacher, parent, and student relationships. This is an especially crucial time for students who have learning, behavior, or emotional problems. Most data on school depression and suicide attempts show an increase in the spring semester. Is this seasonal pattern linked to the experience of school failure and hopelessness?

Changing negative patterns and cycles is what support for learning is all about.

And, school support staff can play a key role in all this by introducing new approaches and partnering with teachers.

In planning what to do, we need to remember the following:

For some students and their parents, report cards and conferences affirm how well things are going. Students are succeeding; parents are proud; teachers feel successful. (When we talk with teachers in urban districts and poor rural areas, they estimate about 10% fit this category.)

For another group of students and parents, the news is a surprise. *"Last year's teacher said things were going all right, and we thought that was so this year until we saw these grades.... No one told us.... We were hoping there was time to make up missing work . . . ."*

For still others, the report card repeats negative interactions with the school. *"My child doesn't do well in school ... the report card only confirms this, and school conferences only make it sound like our fault. . . ."*

Guess which parents don't like to come to school?

School staff lament:

When we have an event for parents at school, only about 10% attend regularly.

The parents with whom we need to connect are the very ones who don't attend conferences and parent events.

When you differentiate subgroups, you begin to appreciate that the 10% who attend school events on a regular basis are probably the same 10% whose kids are doing well. It shouldn't surprise anyone that those who associate school with negative experiences would avoid such experiences whenever possible. We often quote a noted behavioral intervention specialist who likes to emphasize that For every negative encounter you have with a student, you need to have eight positive encounters to restore the balance. The same may be true for parents.

The dilemma:

If a student isn't doing well, parents need to be informed. The problem is how to do it in ways that first and foremost don't alienate the family and hopefully mobilize them to work with the school to make things better. How do we balance a focus on the strengths and assets of students and their families when the report card conveys a negative picture?

Rethinking parent conferences

It's time to rethink end of semester conferences for those students who need support.In redesigning what is done, the objectives are to

- counter tendencies for students and parents to see the reported grades as a reason to give up
- enhance student, parent, and staff motivation to do better.

This requires a process that

- avoids blaming, defensiveness, anger, frustration
- emphasis mutual respect, sharing, and interchange (talking with, not at; discussing, not telling)
- involves students and parents in enhancing the understanding of everyone concerned about what can be done to make things better and in planning how to get from here to there .

One New Strategy: Student Led Conferences

Many schools are recognizing the counterproductive impact of their interactions with parents of students who are not doing well. Student led conferences are an emerging strategy some schools are using in hopes of addressing the problem. Such student-led meetings can be an effective strategy for engaging parents related to counseling, intervention programs, planning for supplementary services, etc. There is a good deal of information on student led conferences.

What follows are adaptations and excerpts from some helpful guidelines developed at the Frisbie Middle School in Rialto, CA

OBJECTIVES: The learners will coordinate and conduct student-led conferences with parents/guardians, after selecting portfolio examples, creating formal invitations, scheduling, creating refreshments, controlling the conferences, evaluating the conference and the learning experience; as social skills the students will be instructed in and will practice manners, courtesy, and etiquette.

The learner will select appropriate portfolio examples from each academic area reflecting growth over the year; create a formal invitation to parents/guardians to attend the conference; rehearse the conduct of the conference with peers; conduct the student-led conference with teacher-observers; instructed in and will practice manners, courtesy, and etiquette; and, create and mail a formal Thank You note at the conference completion.

Sample Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The students will be holding student-led conferences. These conferences will provide an opportunity for your students to reflect upon their successes during the year and to provide you with examples of what they have learned in each of the academic areas. We emphasize that these are student-led conferences and the teachers will be attending as observers, but not as active participants.

The students will be scheduling these conferences during school hours, or immediately after school, arranging for any necessary equipment and refreshments, preparing formal invitations, and conducting the meetings. We view this as an extremely positive opportunity for these students to emphasize their strengths, acknowledge their weaknesses, and, with you in attendance, plan for their approach to the next semester. Please make every effort to be part of this conference. This is an opportunity to open up or improve lines of communication with your students about their education. We strongly encourage you to be a positive part of this conferencing process.

While specific dates and times are not yet established, it would assist us greatly if you could acknowledge your willingness and availability for this unique process. Please return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you.

_____ I am interested and willing to attend the student-led conference

_____ I am not interested in attending the student-led conference.

Student's First And Last Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date:_____

Student-Led Conference AGENDA

1. Meet and greet parents/guardians at the door; escort them to their seat; hold chair as appropriate.
2. Ask parents/guardians if they would like refreshments; serve refreshments.
3. Review the conduct of the conference and the Agenda with parents/guardians; request that questions be held until the completion of the conference.
4. Present and discuss the Conference Portfolio; identify each of the selected projects from each of the academic areas.
5. Present and discuss the "How I See Myself" evaluation form.
6. Ask parents/guardians if they have any questions/comments; present Conference Portfolio to them.
7. Excuse and thank parents/guardians for their attendance; escort them to the door.

Student-Led Conference Checklist

Check off, or get a peer or teacher to check off as appropriate, as you complete each requirement. This will insure that nothing is forgotten or overlooked:

Prior To The Student-Led Conference

Make certain that parent/guardian has returned Parent Interest Letter.
Make certain that parent/guardian has returned Scheduling Letter.
Retrieve at least two (2) portfolio items from each academic area.
Complete at least one (1) Work Evaluation form in each academic area.
Complete "How I See Myself" self-evaluation form.
Review teacher-provided Conference Agenda.
Create and mail formal Parent/Guardian Invitation Letter.
Complete instruction in manners, courtesy and etiquette.
Create, arrange for, or provide refreshments for the actual conference.
Complete rehearsals for actual conference.
Conducting the Student-Led Conference
Check arrangement of materials and room prior to conference.
Meet, greet and seat parents/guardians.
Offer and serve refreshments.
Review Conference Agenda with parents/guardians.
Present and discuss Conference Portfolio.
Present and discuss "How I See Myself" form.
Ask parents for questions or comments.
Excuse and thank parents/guardians for attendance.

After The Student-Led Conference: (1) Complete Post Conference Student Reflection form; (2) Complete and mail formal Thank You note to parents/guardians; (3) Submit completed Student-Led Conference checklist to teacher.

How Do I See Myself?

Give yourself 1 for NEVER, 2 for SELDOM, 3 for FREQUENTLY or 4 for ALWAYS

Quality Producer

I work successfully as a team member.
I produce quality projects, assignments or performances.
I use materials effectively and appropriately.
I met due dates/deadlines.
I go above and beyond.

Effective Communicator

I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.
I make positive contributions to lessons/discussions.
I deal with problems, arguments or fights in a positive way.

Life-Long Learner

I know who to ask for help and information.
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.
I am flexible and creative when necessary.

Responsible Citizen

I demonstrate personal responsibly for attitude, actions, words and work.
I follow rules and directions.
I make a positive contribution to the classroom and community.
I demonstrate respect and understanding for myself and others.

Perceptive Thinker

I demonstrate knowledge and interest in the world and current events.
I use knowledge and creativity to solve problems.
I think beyond the obvious.

Self-Directed Individual

I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe and wise choices.
I set goals and follow through with them.
I start work, stay on task and complete the assignment without being reminded or prompted.

%%%

March

Reducing Stress; Preventing Burnout

At this time of the year, the pressure mounts.

Echoing through the school are phrases such as:

It's too Hard! It's Not Fair! You Can't Win! No one seems to care!

##########

The impact of new accountability standards and assessment has increased pressure on administrators at state, district, and local schools.

As a result, teachers are experiencing tremendous pressure to prepare students for high stakes testing.

In turn, students are under enhanced pressure to perform well on accountability tests.

At this time of the year, there is major concern about the negative impact of the mounting pressure on students, staff, and parents.

It is easy to overlook the psychological needs of staff. Yet, when school staff don't feel good about themselves, it is unlikely they will be effective in making students feel good about themselves.

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Clearly, it's time to take care of ourselves and each other in ways that reduce stress and enhance hope.

Support staff can play a major role in all this. For helpful tools and information, see the Quick Training Aid entitled: School Staff Burnout
(online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm)

Below are a few excerpts related specifically to "Burnout;" however, much of what is presented is relevant to stress in general.

i don't suffer from stress.
i'm a carrier.
dilbert

What Causes Burnout?

> Burnout is used to describe a syndrome that goes beyond physical fatigue from overwork. Stress and emotional exhaustion are part of it, but the hallmark of burnout is the distancing that goes on in response to the overload.
>
> Christina Maslach

Some Primary Causal Factors:

>Lack of Control Over One's Destiny
>Lack of Occupational Feedback and Communication
>Work Overload or Underload
>Contact overload resulting from the necessity for frequent encounters with other people in order to carry out job functions.
>Role Conflict/Ambiguity (Uncertainty about what one is expected to do at work).
>Individual Factors, including financial stability, marital satisfaction, neuroticism, excessive shyness, inflexibility, and poor stress management skills
>Training Deficits

Some Secondary Factors:

>Poor working conditions
>Lack of job security
>Lifestyle changes
>Rapidly changing society that force individuals to make unexpected adjustments in their way of life and work.

(From: A. J. Cedoline (1982) *Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes, and Survival Skills*, Teachers College, Columbia University.)

##########

An Intrinsic Motivational Perspective of Burnout

The behavior referred to as burnout is a psychological phenomenon. One way to understand the problem is in terms of three psychological needs that theorists posit as major intrinsic motivational determinants of behavior. these are the need to feel competent, the need to feel self-determining, and the need to feel interpersonally connected. From this perspective, burnout can be viewed as among the negative outcomes that result when these needs are threatened and thwarted. and, such needs are regularly threatened and thwarted by the prevailing culture of schools.

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Dealing with Burnout

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view burnout as a personal condition. and, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. the problem is multifaceted and complex. while stress-reduction activities often are prescribed, they are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. reducing environmental stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, alone these are insufficient strategies.

The solution requires reculturing schools in ways that minimize the undermining and maximize the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. this involves policies and practices that ensure a daily focus on (1) promoting staff and student well-being and (2) addressing barriers to teaching and learning.

Individuals are capable of learning new coping skills.
>Research demonstrates that educational sessions are effective in helping individuals to learn to cope with the demands of their jobs.

Changing the job environment, as well as the person in it, is essential for interventions to deal with burnout.
>The most effective interventions combine changes in managerial practice with individual-level educational interventions.

A combined managerial and educational approach to intervention tends to emphasize building engagement with work.
>Focusing on engagement creates an increased alliance with the organizational mission.
>Work settings which support positive development of energy, vigor, involvement, dedication, absorption, and effectiveness among employees should be successful in promoting their well-being and productivity.

(From: Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B., & Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 397-422)

Promoting Well-Being and Preventing Burnout

School-based programs should include the following key elements:

1. Inducting newcomers into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way.

2. Opening classroom doors and creating appropriate teams of staff and students who support, nurture, and learn from each other every day.

3. Personalized staff development and support, including:
   In-service programs that account for interests strengths, weaknesses and limitations;
   Approaches that overcome avoidance motivation;
   Structure that provides personalized support and guidance;
   Instruction designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.

4. Restructuring school governance to enable shared decision-making.

(From: *Addressing Barriers to Learning*, Spring 2002, Center for MH in Schools.)

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Providing strategies and skills so everyone at a school can take care of each other and enhance the nurturing environment necessary for learning to occur and all students to succeed is an opportunity for support staff to demonstrate the critical role they play in ensuring No Child is Left Behind.

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If you want to know more about reducing stress see the Center's Quick Find search topic: *Burnout (*http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm) for online articles and centers specializing in this topic as well as links to Center produced materials such as:

>>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout* (Introductory Packet)
>>*School Staff Burnout* (Quick Training Aid)

Also see Quick Find search topic: *Environments that Support Learning*

April

Spring Can Be a High Risk Time for Students

Time is running out for catching up;
decisions are made about who passes and who fails;
&
parties and proms to celebrate the end of the year
can have some negative side effects.

Of special concern are youngsters who seem depressed.

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It's time to prevent;
it's time to help;
and there's still time to enable many students
to turn it all around.

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Keeping Problems in Perspective

In the Summer, 1999 and Fall, 2002 issues of the Center's newsletter, we discussed "Youth Suicide/Depression/Violence." We introduced the discussion as follows:

> Too many young people are not very happy. This is quite understandable among those living in economically impoverished neighborhoods where daily living and school conditions frequently are horrendous. But even youngsters with economic advantages too often report feeling alienated and lacking a sense of purpose.
>
> Youngsters who are unhappy usually act on such feelings. Some "internalize;" some "act out;" and some respond in both ways at different times. The variations can make matters a bit confusing. Is the youngster just sad? Is s/he depressed? Is this a case of ADHD? Individuals may display the same behavior and yet the causes may be different and vice versa. And, matters are further muddled by the reality that the causes vary.
>
> The causes of negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors range from environmental/system deficits to relatively minor group and individual vulnerabilities on to major biological disabilities (that affect only a relatively few individuals). It is the full range of causes that account for the large number of children and adolescents reported as having psychosocial, MH, or developmental problems.
>
> Recent highly publicized events and related policy initiatives have focused renewed attention on youth suicide, depression, and violence. Unfortunately, such events and the

initiatives that follow often narrow discussion of causes and how best to deal with problems.

The Classification of Child and Adolescent Mental Diagnoses in Primary Care (DSM-PC) developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics is a useful resource to help counter this tendency to overpathologize.

ABOUT SEASONAL VARIATIONS

> "... By describing temporal variations in school-associated student homicide and suicide events, this report provides information that can assist school administrators and faculty in planning the timing and focus of violence prevention programs. ... The findings on suicide are consistent with other studies that have shown increased suicide rates in the general population during the spring .... Programs designed to prevent suicide and suicidal behavior among students should recognize that the spring semester is the period of highest risk. The Surgeon General recommends training teachers to recognize students that show signs of risk for suicide and refer them to a mental health professional for assessment and treatment .... Prevention programs can be effective in preventing youth violence .... Effective programs often focus on both individual risk factors and environmental conditions that may predispose young persons toward violent behavior."

From: "Temporal Variations in School-Associated Student Homicide and Suicide Events – U.S., 1992--1999" *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2001), Aug., 10:50(31):657-60.

A Few Related References

Chew KSY, McCleary R. The spring peak in suicides: a cross-national analysis. Soc Sci Med 1995;40:223--30.

Dwyer K, Osher D. Safeguarding our children: an action guide. Washington, DC: US Departments of Education and Justice, American Institutes for Research, 2000.

Kachur SP, Stennies GM, Powell KE, et al. School-associated violent deaths in the United States, 1992 to 1994. JAMA 1996;275:1729--33.

Thornton TN, Craft CA, Dahlberg LL, et al. Best practices of youth violence prevention: a sourcebook for community action. Atlanta, Georgia: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, 2000.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Youth violence: a report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, Maryland: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services; and National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, 2001.

U.S. Public Health Service. The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent suicide. Washington, DC: US Public Health Service, 1999.

Some Center Resources to Guide Prevention and Early Intervention

For specific intervention ideas, see the following Center Resources:

Quick Training Aids:
- >*Suicide Prevention* (materials for staff development including screening tools and descriptions of evidence based programs)
- >*Assessing & Screening*
- >*Case Management in the School Context*
- >*School Interventions to Prevent and Respond to Affect and Mood Problems*

Packets:
- >*Affect and Mood Problems Related to School Aged Youth* (Intro. Packet)
- >*Screening/Assessing Students: Indicators and Tools* (Resource Aid Packet)
- >*School Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide* (Technical Assistance Sampler)

Also see Quick Find search topics: >*Suicide Prevention* >*Depression*

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Below Are Some Tools for Staff Development

SOME PREVENTION GUIDELINES

In the Technical Assistance Sampler: School Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide, you will find the following Excerpts from... Guidelines for School Based Suicide Prevention Programs circulated by the American Association of Suicidology, 1999, http://www.suicidology.org

Conceptual Basis for Prevention Approaches

A clear conceptual basis gives us the rationale for choosing a particular prevention strategy for a particular problem, with a particular population, in a particular setting. Part of the effort to build the conceptual base for prevention in general has resulted in typology intended to clarify prevention methodology (Institute of Medicine,1994) which included:

1. Universal interventions, which are directed at an entire population rather than selected subpopulations or individuals.
2. Selective interventions, which are targeted to subpopulations that are characterized by shared exposure to some epidemiologically determined risk factor(s).
3. Indicated interventions are targeted to specific individuals who are already preclinical levels of a disorder and who have been identified through screening procedures.

(Cont.)

Universal Approaches

The goal of universal approaches is to raise the overall supportiveness and responsiveness of the at risk youths' environment. The role of the school is seen as critical, but limited. All schools are not assumed to possess the resources to treat suicidal or emotionally disturbed students. They can enhance their capacity to identify and get help for these students as part of their mandate to socialize and protect their students.

The overall goals of the universal program are to increase the likelihood that school gatekeepers (administrators, faculty, and staff) and peers who come into contact with at-risk youth can more readily identify them, provide an appropriate initial response to them, will know how to obtain help for them, and are consistently inclined to take such action.

Protective Factors & Wellness Promotion

Some longitudinal research indicates that the presence of protective factors may have a stronger influence on the likelihood that risk behaviors will occur than the presence of risk factors. These protective factors include personal characteristics such as social problem solving competencies; and, environmental characteristics such as contact with a caring adult and a school climate that promotes students' involvement, contribution, and sense of connection with their school. One caveat concerning resilient youth is in order. Research indicates that youth who come from high risk environments and yet do well in school and peer relations still evidence a greater prevalence of anxiety and depression than peers who do not come from such environments. Anxiety and depression are significant risk factors for suicide, and these internalizing disorders are more likely to go undetected than the externalizing behaviors.

Selective Prevention Programs

While subgroups that are at greater risk for suicide will by definition be exposed to universal programs, these programs are aimed more at their peers and may not be of sufficient dosage or focus to affect specific vulnerable subpopulations such as disenfranchised or depressed students. Some of these students may become known to school officials, particularly if school personnel and parents are educated to identify troubled students before they make overt statements or attempts. Thus gatekeeper training is a common selective program that has shown promise for increasing identification and referral.

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There is some evidence that students are more likely to use telephone crisis and referral services because they are anonymous, and don't require fees, transportation, or appointments. Publicizing these services (e.g. through wallet cards continuously available throughout the school) and linking them to established screening teams can facilitate contact with at risk youth. However, these services are still underutilized by males.

Indicated Prevention Programs

The goal of indicated programs is to reduce the incidence of suicidal behaviors among students who already display risk factors or early warning signs associated with suicide such as frequent suicidal thoughts, previous attempts, depression, or substance abuse.

Indicated programs require the presence in schools of individuals who are trained to screen students and to provided the indicated programs. School faculty or special services staff such as guidance counselors can be trained to provide the programs, but professionals such as psychologists or social workers would have to conduct the screening. There are a growing number of school-linked services (community gatekeepers who provide assessment and counseling services on site) and school based service centers or clinics that can house indicated interventions.

The overall goals of indicated programs are to identify at risk students, preferably through existing school procedures, and provide them with accessible, brief interventions that include support, skill training, and opportunities to bond with the school and maintain contact with a caring adult.

Requirements for Effective Prevention Programs

Conceptually & empirically grounded goals and objectives.
Clearly articulated and packaged components (lesson outlines and plans, detailed instructor guidelines that include typical student responses and how to respond to these, all handouts, and references for additional materials).
Comprehensive: address all levels of targeted organization.
Ecological: address the multiple contexts in which participants interact.
Conform to the context/culture/values of the target population and organization.

(Cont.)

Comprehensive School Based Prevention Programs

. . . Comprehensive programs are multilevel, multicomponent interventions that include the following components, usually implemented in this order:

1. Administrative consultation to ensure that policies and procedures for responding to at risk students, attempts, and completions are in place; and to ensure that community linkages exist for close coordination of referrals to, and return of students from, community gatekeepers.
1. School gatekeeper training for all faculty and staff (including such staff as bus drivers and cafeteria workers) on the identification of, initial response to, and effective referral of troubled and at risk students. This sometimes includes the establishment of in school crisis response teams made up of faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. Parent training covering similar material as the school gatekeeper training, as well as means restriction strategies.
4. Community gatekeeper training that incorporates policies and procedures for effective response and coordination with schools and families. This sometimes includes training in the treatment of depressed and suicidal adolescents. Community crisis teams and media campaigns have also been implemented.
5. Student classes usually consist of 4 to 5 class periods included in the health curriculum. Classes include a variety of media, and involve students in discussions and roleplays to prepare them to recognize and respond to troubled peers, and to destigmatize seeking adult help.
6. Postvention interventions that are provided by external consultants to schools and communities in which a suicide completion or serious attempt has occurred. These interventions consist of standard steps designed to process faculty, student, and community reactions to the event; facilitate grief work; and, prevent imitative acts among identified vulnerable peers.

The following screening tools are from our Center's Technical Assistance Sampler on ***School Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide.*** (Http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu)

Suicidal Assessment - Checklist *

Student's Name:_____ Date:_____ Interviewer: _____

(Suggested points to cover with student/parent)

(1) PAST ATTEMPTS, CURRENT PLANS, AND VIEW OF DEATH

Does the individual have frequent suicidal thoughts?	Y	N
Have there been suicide attempts by the student or significant others in his or her life?	Y	N
Does the student have a detailed, feasible plan?	Y	N
Has s/he made special arrangements as giving away prized possessions?	Y	N
Does the student fantasize about suicide as a way to make others feel guilty or as a way to get to a happier afterlife?	Y	N

(2) REACTIONS TO PRECIPITATING EVENTS

Is the student experiencing severe psychological distress?	Y	N
Have there been major changes in recent behavior along with negative feelings and thoughts?	Y	N

(Such changes often are related to recent loss or threat of loss of significant others or of positive status and opportunity. They also may stem from sexual, physical, or substance abuse. Negative feelings and thoughts often are expressions of a sense of extreme loss, abandonment, failure, sadness, hopelessness, guilt, and sometimes inwardly directed anger.)

(3) PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Is there a lack of a significant other to help the student survive?	Y	N
Does the student feel alienated?	Y	N

(4) HISTORY OF RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR

Does the student take life-threatening risks or display poor impulse control?	Y	N

*Use this checklist as an exploratory guide with students about whom you are concerned. Each yes raises the level of risk, but there is no single score indicating high risk. A history of suicide attempts, of course, is a sufficient reason for action. High risk also is associated with very detailed plans (when, where, how) that specify a lethal and readily available method, a specific time, and a location where it is unlikely the act would be disrupted. Further high risk indicators include the student having made final arrangements and information about a critical, recent loss. Because of the informal nature of this type assessment, it should not be filed as part of a student's regular school records.

Follow-Through Steps After Assessing Suicidal Risk -- *Checklist**

____(1) As part of the process of assessment, efforts will have been made to discuss the problem openly and nonjudgmentally with the student. (Keep in mind how seriously devalued a suicidal student feels. Thus, avoid saying anything demeaning or devaluing, while conveying empathy, warmth, and respect.) If the student has resisted talking about the matter, it is worth a further effort because the more the student shares, the better off one is in trying to engage the student in problem solving.

____(2) Explain to the student the importance of and your responsibility for breaking confidentiality in the case of suicidal risk. Explore whether the student would prefer taking the lead or at least be present during the process of informing parents and other concerned parties.

____(3) If not, be certain the student is in a supportive and understanding environment (not left alone/isolated) while you set about informing others and arranging for help.

____(4) Try to contact parents by phone to
a. inform about concern
b. gather additional information to assess risk
c. provide information about problem and available resources
d. offer help in connecting with appropriate resources

Note: if parents are uncooperative, it may be necessary to report child endangerment after taking the following steps.

____(5) If a student is considered to be in danger, only release her/him to the parent or someone who is equipped to provide help. In high risk cases, if parents are unavailable (or uncooperative) and no one else is available to help, it becomes necessary to contact local public agencies (e.g., children's services, services for emergency hospitalization, local law enforcement).

Agencies will want the following information:

student's name/address/birthdate/social security number
data indicating student is a danger to self (see Suicide Assessment -- Checklist)
stage of parent notification
language spoken by parent/student
health coverage plan if there is one
where student is to be found

____(6) Follow-up with student and parents to determine what steps have been taken to minimize risk.

____(7) Document all steps taken and outcomes. Plan for aftermath intervention and support.

____(8) Report child endangerment if necessary.

*A coordinated school plan for addressing these concerns can be developed by the school's Crisis Team or the Resource Coordinating Team. It is important that everyone has the training and teamwork for coordinating action when a crisis arises.

Finding other training aids

Go to:

National Mental Health Information Center
http://www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs/default.asp

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
http://cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm

- *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health*
  www.brightfutures.org

And, of course, the two national centers focused on mental health in schools:

Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Center for School Mental Health Assistance, University of Maryland, Baltimore
http://csmha.umaryland.edu/

Some Specific Aids to Download from our Website – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

>>*Suicide Prevention* (Quick Training Aid)

>>*School Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide* (Technical Aid Sampler)

>>*Youth Suicide/Depression/Violence* (article in the Center's quarterly newsletter)

Also see the Quick Find search topic: >*Suicide Prevention* (which contains all the above along with references and links to other relevant resources)

May

Time to Help Students and Families Plan Successful Transitions to a New Grade or a New School

The traditional school year draws to a close:

Teachers, students, and families appreciate their work together . . .

and anticipate the changes ahead.

>>>>new teachers

>>>>new schools

>>>>new peer groups

>>>>new opportunities, challenges, and stressors

Transitions are truly risky opportunities

Transitions arise related to each new step in formal education and in moving to and from special programs and to post school living and work. For those making such transitions, well-designed support during the period of transition can make a great difference in their lives. From the first grade-to-grade transition to the move to middle school and high school and every other move to a new school, all call for well-conceived programs designed to support transitions.

This means programs that prepare students and their families for the transitions *and* follow-up to ensure the transition has been a good one.

About Support for Transitions to a New Grade or a New School

Programs are needed that

provide closure related to what the student is leaving behind

enhance articulation between the old and the new

welcome newcomers and ensure they have the type of social support that facilitates positive acceptance and adjustment in the new setting

assess transition success

implement timely corrective interventions when transitions are not successful

Clearly, interventions to enable successful transitions make a significant difference in how motivationally ready and able students are to benefit from schooling. Available evidence supports the positive impact of early childhood programs in preparing young children for school. The programs are associated with increases in academic performance and may even contribute to decreases in discipline problems in later school years.

Evaluations show that well-conceived and implemented programs can successfully ease students' transition between grades, and preliminary evidence suggests the promise of programs that provide welcoming and social support for children and families transitioning into a new school. Programs that aid in the transition in and out of special education need better implementation and related evaluation. Available reports suggest such interventions will enhance students' attitudes about school and self and will improve their academic performance. Finally, programs providing vocational training and career education are having an impact in terms of increasing school retention and graduation and show promise for successfully placing students in jobs following graduation.

It has taken a long time for schools to face up to the importance of establishing transition programs. A good beginning has now been made, but there is much more to do. A major example of need involves the current push for greater inclusion of special education students. Such a policy can only succeed if sophisticated transition programs are developed.

In enhancing what your school does to support transitions, the following self-study survey can be used as a stimulus for staff discussion and brainstorming.

Support for Transitions: Self-Study Survey

The emphasis here is on planning, developing, and maintaining a comprehensive focus on the variety of transition concerns confronting students and their families. The work in this area can be greatly aided by advanced technology. Anticipated outcomes are reduced levels of alienation and increased levels of positive attitudes toward and involvement at school and in a range of learning activity.

A. What programs for establishing a welcoming and supportive community are at the site?

1. Are there welcoming materials/a welcoming decor?
   - >Are there welcome signs?
   - >Are welcoming information materials used?
   - >Is a special welcoming booklet used?
   - >Are materials translated into appropriate languages?
   - >Is advanced technology used as an aid?
2. Are there orientation programs?
   - >Are there introductory tours?
   - >Are introductory presentations made?
   - >Are new arrivals introduced to special people such as the principal and teachers?
   - >Are special events used to welcome recent arrivals?
   - >Are different languages accommodated?
3. Is special assistance available to those who need help registering?
4. Are social support strategies and mechanisms used?
   - >Are peer buddies assigned? Are peer parents assigned?
   - >Are special invitations used to encourage family involvement?
   - >Are special invitations used to encourage students to join in activities?
   - >Are advocates available when new arrivals need them?
5. Other? (specify) _____

B. Which of the following are used for grade-to-grade and program-to-program articulation?

1. Are orientations to the new situation provided?
2. Is transition counseling provided?
3. Are students taken on "warm-up" visits?
4. Is there a "survival" skill training program?
5. Is the new setting primed to accommodate the individual's need?
6. other (specify) _____

C. Which of the following are used to facilitate transition to post school living?

1. vocational counseling
2. college counseling
3. a mentoring program
4. job training
5. job opportunities on campus
6. a work-study program
7. life skills counseling
8. Other? (specify) _____

D. What programs are used to build staff capacity to support transitions?

1. Is there ongoing training for team members concerned with Support for Transitions?
2. Is there ongoing training for teachers, office staff, administrators, peer buddies?
3. Other? (specify) _____

E. Which of the following topics are covered in educating stakeholders?

1. understanding how to create a psychological sense of community
2. developing systematic social supports for students, families, and staff
3. developing motivation knowledge, and skills for successful transitions
4. the value of and strategies for creating before and after school programs

Indicate any other ways that are used to provide support for transitions.
Indicate other things you want the school to do to provide support for transitions.

A Few Examples of Grade Articulation Programs

The following descriptions are from the Center's Technical Assistance Sampler entitled:
A Sampling of Outcome Findings from Intervention Relevant to Addressing Barriers to Learning

School Transitional Environment Project, or STEP

This primary prevention effort is designed to assist young adolescents complete the expected transition to junior or senior high school by modifying key elements of the school setting. The school environment is reorganized to more closely resemble the elementary grades, with students attending all core courses together, regular student-teacher contact, and opportunities for informal social interactions. The role of homeroom teacher is restructured as well, serving as the link between students and their families, schools, and communities. Homeroom teachers are both instructors and social service counselors. By preventing students from experiencing school change as a stressful life event, STEP aims to help students cope better with other life stressors occurring simultaneously.

An earlier version of STEP was *The Transition Project:* This Project aimed at increasing levels of peer and social support during transition to high school and reducing the difficulties of mastering transition tasks. It has two primary components: (1) restructuring the role of homeroom teachers to include guidance and counseling and (2) reorganizing the regularities of the school environment to reduce the social setting flux. Midyear and end of ninth grade assessments were collected on participants and matched controls measuring self-concepts, perceptions of school environment, and eighth- and ninth-grade attendance and grade averages. By the end of ninth grade, participants had significantly better attendance records and grade point averages as well as more stable self-concepts than controls. Further, by the final evaluation point, they also reported perceiving the school environment as having greater clarity of expectations and organizational structure and higher levels of teacher support and involvement.

For more information, see:

Felner, R.D., Ginter, M. & Primavera, J. (1982). Primary prevention during school transitions: Social support and environmental structure. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 10*, 277-289.

Felner, R., and A. Adan. *The School Transitional Environment Project: An Ecological Intervention and Evaluation.* In *Fourteen Ounces of Prevention: A Casebook For Practitioners*, 1988.

Felner, R., S. Farber and J. Primavera. *Transitions and Stressful Life Events: A Model For Primary Prevention.* New York, NY: Pergamon Press, 1983.

The Social Support Program

This program provides teacher support, group support, and parental support to poor academic transition students. Sixty-six first year 6th graders were put into one of three groups: no-intervention, a group receiving Components A, B, and C, or a group receiving Component A only. Results showed that for full and partial intervention, mean GPA improved from pre- to post-intervention and from pre-intervention to follow up (only significant for full intervention group). The full intervention group had lower depression scores at post-intervention and follow up than pre-intervention. Full and partial intervention had lower anxiety scores at post-intervention and follow up than pre-intervention. Full and partial intervention groups' stress decreased over time on peer relationships only. The partial intervention group showed significantly greater teacher reported problems on socialized aggression and anxiety/withdrawal at post-intervention and follow up than full intervention and no intervention groups.

For more information, see:

Greene, R.W., & Ollendick, T.H. (1993). Evaluation of a multidimensional program for sixth-graders in transition from elementary to middle school. *Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 162-176.

The Bridge Program

This is designed to ease transition between middle and high school. It is a one-semester transitional program for all incoming ninth grade students and provides them with a variety of activities that promote academic achievement, responsibility, school spirit, fellowship, acceptance, and empowerment. Bridge students had 70.7% of their grades in core classes at or above C, whereas the previous non-Bridge ninth grade class had 68.5% of grades at or above C. As tenth graders, they averaged 75.8% of their grades above C, compared to non-Bridge tenth graders who averaged 68% of grades above C. Also, non-Bridge ninth graders had a 22% withdrawal rate from school (dropouts and transfers) while only 5% of Bridge ninth graders withdrew. Regarding discipline, Bridge freshmen were disciplined less (22%) compared to non-Bridge freshmen (34%). The majority of students and staff supported the program and thought it was effective.

For more information, see:

Sheets, R.A., Izard-Baldwin, G., & Atterberry, P. (December, 1997). Bridge: A Program Designed to Ease the Transition from the Middle Level to the High School. *Bulletin, 81*(593). The National Association of Secondary School Principals. For more information about the Bridge program, contact Gloria Izard-Baldwin at gizard@cks.ssd.k12.wa.us.

Sixth Grade Transition Groups

The goal is to increase students' ability to successfully negotiate the academic, social, and emotional challenges that accompany transition to middle school. Three hundred eight fifth graders received a social competency/stress reduction program. Results showed that 94% of the students said they found the group helpful, 72% said that Day 3 was most helpful, and 92% would recommend it to fifth grade students next year.

For more information, see:

Hellem, D.W. (1990). Sixth grade transition groups: An approach to primary prevention. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 10(4)*, 303-311.

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As students end a school year, new interventions needs arise. Minimally, there is a need to anticipate transitions and assist students and their families in the move to the next teacher(s) and setting. Ideally, efforts should be made to facilitate positive expectations and the beginnings of a strong working relationship.

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If you want to know more about assisting students and families with transitions, see the following Center Materials and Resources at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

>>*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families* (Technical Aid Packet)

>>*What Schools Can Do to Welcome and Meet the Needs of All Students and Families* (Guide to Practice)

>>*Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning* (Training Tutorial)

>>Also see Quick Find search topics: >*Support for Transitions*
>*Transition Programs/Grade Articulation*

June

Summer and the Living Aint Easy

Whether on year round schedules or offering summer school, school staff must deal with summer-minded students

##

>>Year round schools

>>Summer school

>>Full year employment

For many students, teachers, support staff, and administrators, summer vacations are a thing of the past. Given that reality, it is essential to recognize what that means and to look for the opportunities that are present. For example, during the summer months, sometimes the number of students are fewer and the opportunities for innovation greater. Teachers and learning support staff may have more time to attend to students at risk.

Here are some ideas to add to your thinking about helping students during the summer months.

##

Learning loss and increases in risky behavior are major worries related to students who aren't in school during the summer. As the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Summer Learning reports in their document *Primer on Summer Learning Loss:*

> Low-income children and youth experience greater summer learning losses than their higher income peers. On average, middle-income students experience slight gains in reading performance over the summer months. Low-income students experience an average summer learning loss in reading achievement of over two months. (Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. Review of Educational Research, 66, 227-268)

> Studies show that out-of-school time is a dangerous time for unsupervised children and teens. They are more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; and drop out of school than those who have the opportunity to benefit from constructive activities supervised by responsible adults. (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. A matter of time: risk and opportunity in the out-of-school hours: recommendations for strengthening community programs for youth. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994)

Using the Summer Productively

Schools (especially support staff), working with the community, need to help develop summer month programs that help address barriers to learning, promote healthy development, and enhance equity of opportunity. As stressed in *Primer on Summer Learning Loss*: *If policymakers are serious about improving excellence and equity in public education, social science research suggests that high-quality summer programs must become a significant and central component in school reform efforts.*

Below are a few excerpts from the ***Primer on Summer Learning Loss:***

- All young people should have consistent access to high-quality summer enrichment programs throughout their educational careers. Programs should be proactive and offered for multiple summers.

- Elementary schools and youth development organizations should form partnerships to prevent summer loss in reading among low-income students. ... Teachers and youth development professionals should use the summers to collaborate and bridge gaps between schools and youth programs. Summer programs should incorporate research-based practices for improving cognitive development from high-quality after-school enrichment programs. . . . Summer learning should be a community-wide, inter-agency priority. There are a wide variety of roles that public agencies, community-based organizations, cultural institutions, and colleges and universities can play in improving the quality and quantity of summer learning opportunities for all young people. Improved collaboration and leveraging of funds from multiple sources will help ensure greater levels of access to programs.

- Program models should maintain a strong academic focus, but also acknowledge the unique role that summers play within American culture. Summer programs can demonstrate the power of informal learning experiences such as reading and discussing books for pleasure and gaining exposure to new cultures and ideas.

- Summer programs should be used to support the recruitment, professional development, and retention of teachers and youth program staff. ... Summers should be used to encourage teachers to try new techniques, teach different subjects or grades, acquire new skills and mentor new colleagues. Simultaneously, summers could be used to attract current college students or recent graduates to internship experiences in public school classrooms and with non-profit youth development organizations.

Are Remedial Summer School Programs Effective?

[Research suggests:] Whether teachers knew their students before summer school was an important predictor of test-score increases and teacher practice. ... The quality of interactions between teachers and students was a distinguishing factor between the most effective and the average classrooms. Students whose teachers spent more time individualizing the curriculum and working with students outside of class had greater learning gains than students in classrooms where teachers spent less time adapting the curriculum and providing individualized attention. ...

> "...It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of innovation and creativity in meeting the needs of struggling student. Summer school involves intensive reteaching of materials that students did not master during the school year, but those students need help that goes beyond simply reteaching the same materials in the same way...
>
> What is the "something different" that summer schools need to do? Doing "something different" often means connecting subject matter to real-life situations that are relevant to students. It might mean finding books about baseball to read and using baseball statistics in math instruction for a student who lives and breathes the sport. It could involve using musical themes to engage a student who constantly drums on his desk or incorporating a lot of physical movement to reach the aspiring dancer. It might mean using technology that presents materials in a game-like format. It might mean simply giving a student the opportunity to discuss the material with teachers and peers to an extent not possible in the regular classroom..."
>
> From: The Southern Regional Education Board report *Summer School: Unfulfilled Promise*, 2002, http://www.sreb.org,

Also, see G.D. Borman (2001). Summers are for learning. *Principal, 80*(3), 26-29.

Of course, summer provides an opportunity to introduce many ideas for making both the content and the process of teaching and learning more relevant to students. As suggested above, active learning is especially important. There are many ways to promote active learning at all grade levels. It can take the form of class discussions, problem based and discovery learning, a project approach, involvement in learning centers, experiences outside the classroom, and independent learning in or out of school. Students may become involved in classroom, school-wide, or community service or action projects. Older students may be involved in "internships" or service learning. Service learning involves students in identifying a real community need, ties the community work with academic goals, encourages the students to reflect on and evaluate their learning, and strengths the relationship between community and school.

For more on active learning, see our Center resources entitled:

> ***Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom Focused Enabling*** (a set of Continuing Education Modules)

> ***Re-engaging Students in Learning*** (a Quick Training Aid)

Download from http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

For more information on service learning see "Building Community Through Service Learning" at http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/44/03/4403.pdf)

For more about engaging students in learning during summer and all year round, see the following Center Materials and Resources at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

>>Quick Find search topics:
- *After School Programs
- *Classroom Focused Enabling
- *Environments that support learning
- *Mentoring
- *Motivation
- *Youth Development

>>After School Programs and Addressing Barriers to Learning (Technical Aid Packet)

>>Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom Focused Enabling (Continuing Education Modules)

>>Classroom Changes to Enhance and Re-engage Students in Learning (Training Tutorial)

>>Re-engaging Students in Learning (Quick Training Aid)

July

Using "Down Time" to Plan Better Ways to Work Together in Providing Learning Supports

Over a school year, it is hard to find enough time to stop, think, and plan new ways of doing things.

It is a bit like Winnie the Pooh's experience going downstairs. As Milne describes it:

> *"Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he know, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it."*

The month of July in many schools is "down time." (For year-long schools, intersessions are comparable times.) Down time provides an opportunity to stop and think long enough to plan better ways of doing things. Such time blocks can allow staff who work year round to plan new ways of providing and enhancing supports for student learning. Such periods also allow for special training opportunities.

Time to Think About Building a Learning Supports Component

As is described in this series of monthly ideas for enhancing support at a school, there is a rhythm to the course of a school year. Varying demands arise every month. Knowing these cyclical demands helps to anticipate and plan what to do to support students and enable learning. At most schools, support staff have had to keep "bumping their heads" as they struggle each day to meet the demands on them. This usually means reacting with a limited set of piecemeal and fragmented strategies. Now is the time to think about how to become proactive and more effective.

The aim should be to set a process into motion that can lead to development of a comprehensive and cohesive component to address barriers to student learning and promote healthy development. Such a component has been called an enabling or learning supports component. Planning and developing such a component not only can end fragmented approaches, it can move toward eliminating the counterproductive competition for resources and end the marginalization of student support staff. (See the Guidelines for a Student Support Component on the Center's website – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu)

Building an enabling or learning supports component requires enhancing the capacity of a school's support staff so that they can be more effective in addressing the many factors that interfere with students succeeding at school. One way to enhance the capacity of support staff is to develop a mechanism that enables them to work together on a regular basis.

Time to Think About Establishing a Resource-Oriented Mechanism

A *Resource Coordinating Team* provides a good example of a resource-oriented mechanism designed to develop an enabling or learning supports component at a school.

WHAT IS A RESOURCE COORDINATING TEAM?

Every school that wants to improve its systems for providing student support needs a mechanism that focuses specifically on improving resource use and enhancement. A *Resource Coordinating Team* is a vital form of such a mechanism.

Most schools have teams that focus on individual student/family problems (i.e., case-oriented teams). These teams focus on such functions as referral, triage, and care monitoring or management. In contrast to this case-by-case focus, a school's *Resource Coordinating Team* can take responsibility for enhancing use of all resources available to the school for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. This includes analyzing how existing resources are deployed and clarifying how they can be used to build a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach. It also integrally involves the community with a view to integrating human and financial resources from public and private sectors to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

What are the functions of a resource coordinating team?

A Resource Coordinating Team performs essential functions related to the implementation and ongoing development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development.

Examples of key functions are:

- Mapping resources at school and in the community
- Analyzing resources
- Identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school
- Coordinating and integrating school resources & connecting with community resources
- Establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones
- Planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems
- Recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
- Developing strategies for enhancing resources
- "Social marketing"

Who's on a Resource Coordinating Team?

A Resource Coordinating Team might begin with only two people. Where feasible, it should expand into an inclusive group of informed stakeholders who are able and willing. This would include the following:

- Principal or assistant principal
- School Psychologist
- Counselor
- School Nurse
- School Social Worker
- Behavioral Specialist
- Special education teacher
- Title I coordinator
- Representatives of families
- Representatives of community agencies involved regularly with the school
- Student representation (when appropriate and feasible)
- Others who have a particular interest and ability to help with the functions

It is important to integrate the Resource Coordinating Team with the infrastructure mechanisms at the school focused on instruction and management/governance. For example, the school administrator on the team must represent the team at administrative meetings; there also should be a representative at governance meetings; and another should represent the team at a Resource Coordinating *Council* formed for the feeder pattern of schools.

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Center Tools and Aids for Developing and Guiding the Work of a Resource Coordinating Team

> *Resource-Oriented Teams: Key Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Education Supports*

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What it Needs*

>*Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change*

>*Guidelines for a Student Support Component*

Go to – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

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Working together enables a small group of dedicated stakeholders not only to anticipate the predictable demands of the school year, it enables them to proactively use scarce resources in ways that help many more students and staff meet the mission of the school.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

August

Now is the Time to Develop Ways to Avoid *Burnout*

The beginning of a new school year is a time of optimism and renewed commitment and energy. Students have a "fresh start;" most teachers have enhanced energy and positive expectations; school support staff and administrators are committed to school improvement and programs to enhance student success .

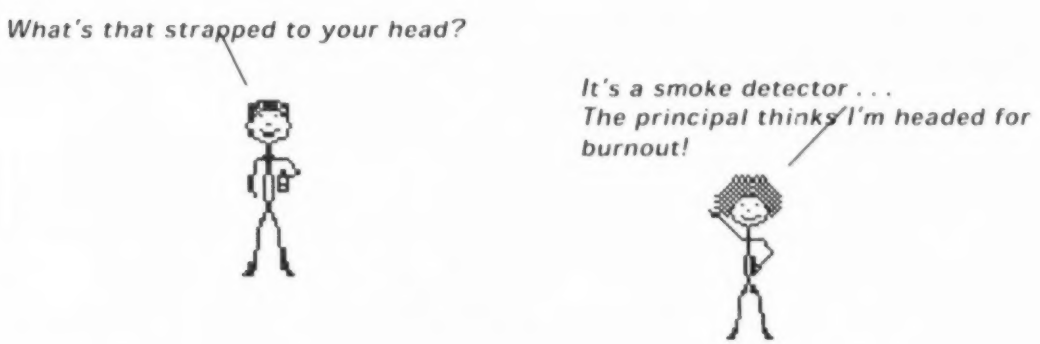
. . . so far so good.

But, what has been planned to ensure the optimism and good intentions are not undermined?

The announcement on every airline is a familiar one:

"When the oxygen mask falls,
adults should put their's on before assisting children."

Rather than simply addressing burnout as inevitable as the year progresses, here are some ideas for what a school might do from the beginning of the year to support staff so that they will be better able to do their best for students. The focus is on:



Enhancing the Resilience of Adults at School and Creating a Sense of Community

One of the most important research findings related to good outcomes for children and youth is understanding that by enhancing protective factors or buffers, risks can be reduced and barriers overcome. We must remember that this applies to adults as well.

In describing the characteristics of someone who is resilient, Demos says they have

a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy successfully coping with challenges

an active stance toward an obstacle or difficulty. The ability to see a difficulty as a problem that can be worked on, overcome, change, endured, or resolved in some way

reasonable persistence, with an ability to know when "enough is enough"

a capacity to develop a range of strategies and skills to bear on the problem, which can be used in a flexible way.

In his work, David Hawkins emphasizes the importance of developing strong bonds. He stresses these arise from (a) opportunities for meaningful involvement (ways to make a real contribution and feel valued for effort and accomplishment); (b) developing skill (social, cognitive, emotional, behavioral) that enable success, and (c) recognition for involvement (including corrective feedback) to motivate continued contributions.

It is unlikely that a school that does not promote resilience for staff can promote it for students.

Opportunities to Initiate from the Beginning of a School Year

Extra Support for New Staff

New staff need a considerable amount of support and on-the-job training. Inducting newcomers into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way is needed if they are to survive the challenges and become career professionals. The crux of the matter is to *enhance collegial supports* in ways that ensure effective welcoming and orientations, personalized mentoring and staff development, teaming with experienced staff, and special assistance as soon as problems arise.

Special Roles for Experienced Staff

Working conditions can be transformed by *opening classroom doors and enabling experience staff to work with newcomers and to learn from each other.* Personalized contacts increase opportunities for staff (and students) to support, guide, nurture, and enhance each other's competence every day. Learning from colleagues is not just a talking game. It involves modeling and guiding change (e.g., demonstrating and discussing new approaches; guiding initial practice and implementation; and following-up to improve and refine). Depending on practicalities, such modeling could take place in a teacher's own classroom or be carried out in colleagues' classrooms. Some of it may take the form of team teaching. Other special roles for staff include enhancing their involvement in meaningful decision-making and celebrating their accomplishments in ways that enhance their positive social status.

Working with Unions to Enhance Resilience

A major function of unions is to improve the working conditions of the members. Moving to a proactive stance, the National Education Association created the Health Information Network. Their website features "Resiliency 101." (Http://www.neahin.org) They stress:

> "...Resilience applies to everyone at school. Identify at least one protective factor that exists for school staff. How can faculty and administration maximize the benefit of that protective factor to enhance your own resilience? ... Are mistakes, bad decisions, discipline problems, difficulties with academic performance or crises always signs of failure? Or, could they also be 'teachable moments?'... If you believe that nothing you do will make much of a difference, then coming to work at school each day becomes something you have to do, rather than something you want to do."

Then, they ask: "What can you do to make your work and your experience at school more rewarding and enjoyable? ... How might you begin your own journey as a resilience-oriented educator?"

Expanding on this, a good question for support staff and teacher union leaders at the school to explore with school staff as part of a staff development session is: *How can we all promote a climate that strengthens the resilience of school staff?*

Focusing this Year's Staff Development on Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Classroom Learning

In keeping with prevailing demands for higher standards and achievement test scores, the focus of most staff development is on curriculum, standards, and test preparation. Every teacher must have the ability and resources to bring a sound curriculum to life and apply strategies that make learning meaningful. At the same time, however *teacher and student support staff must learn how to "enable" learning by addressing barriers to learning and teaching – especially factors leading to low or negative motivation for schooling.*
There is a major disconnect between what teachers need to learn and what they are taught about addressing students problems. Think in terms of strategies to engage student interest and attention, one to one or small group instruction, enhancing protective factors, and asset

building, as well as varied forms of special assistance. All this expands definitions of good teaching to encompass practices that enable teachers to be effective with a wide range of students. From this perspective, good teaching involves fostering a crating context for learning; it encompasses development of a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big classroom into a set of smaller units; in encompasses many strategies for preventing and addressing problems as soon as they arise.

The Center has a set of continuing education modules to aid with staff development focused on engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning. The work is entitled: *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling*. The emphasis is on enhancing classroom-based efforts to enable learning by increasing teacher effectiveness for preventing and handling problems in the classroom. This is accomplished by providing personalized help to increase a teacher's array of strategies for working with a wider range of individual differences in student motivation and capability (e.g., through use of accommodative and compensatory strategies that engage and re-engage students in learning, peer tutoring and volunteers to enhance social and academic support, resource and itinerant teachers and counselors in the classroom). Through classroom-focused enabling programs, teachers are better prepared to address similar problems when they arise in the future. Anticipated immediate outcomes are fewer behavior problems, increased mainstream efficacy, reduced need for special services, and fewer absences; over time, there should be fewer dropouts and enhanced achievement.

Ideas presented here are brief and meant to initiate a planning process. For more detail on all of these ideas, you will see links to indepth resources at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu.

See Related Center Materials:

- >>*Working Together: From School-Based Collaborative Teams to School-Community-Higher Education Connections*
- >>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*
- >>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What it Needs*
- >>*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*

Also see Center *Quick Find search topics* (with links to online resources and centers):

>Burnout >Collaboration >Environments that support learning >Mentoring >Motivation >Resilience/Protective Factors >Volunteers

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